

VZCZCXR07987
PP RUEHDBU
DE RUEHEK #0239/01 0660844
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 070844Z MAR 07
FM AMEMBASSY BISHKEK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9093
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1997
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 0087
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 0097
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 0562
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 0385
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 0094
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 0252
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/Joint STAFF WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0494
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 2390
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1774
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BISHKEK 000239

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DEPT FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/07/2017

TAGS: PGOV PREL KG

SUBJECT: KYRGYZ FOREIGN MINISTER OUTLINES "PILLARS OF FOCUS"

REF: A. BISHKEK 222

1B. BISHKEK 194

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Classified By: Amb. Marie L. Yovanovitch, Reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: Ambassador briefed new Foreign Minister Karabayev March 5 on the range of interagency U.S. assistance programs in Kyrgyzstan. Karabayev said he thought U.S. assistance was "in tune" with Kyrgyzstan's priorities, and he expressed interest in increased collaboration. Karabayev then revealed President Bakiyev's three "pillars of focus" for the Kyrgyz government: political stability, rule of law, and improved conditions for the middle class. He outlined an extensive and varied list of MFA priorities and programs to carry out the president's goals and said he thought many of his ideas corresponded with U.S. assistance objectives. Karabayev urged the U.S. to expand its public relations efforts and highlight U.S. assistance programs to counter negative publicity associated with the Manas Air Base. (Issues related to the base reported septel.) End Summary.

CLOSER COOPERATION ON ASSISTANCE

12. (C) Ambassador briefed new Foreign Minister Ednan Karabayev March 5 on U.S. assistance to the Kyrgyz Republic, highlighting the main sectors of economic growth, health and education, good governance, security, and humanitarian assistance. Karabayev expressed his appreciation for the briefing and noted that U.S. assistance was "in tune" with Kyrgyzstan's priorities. Ambassador stressed the need to resolve certain issues affecting assistance implementers, such as Social Fund requirements and accreditation difficulties (Ref A). Karabayev promised to address

Ambassador's concerns through an upcoming meeting with representatives of foreign NGOs to review all issues and provide a public response. He asserted his commitment to assisting the NGOs, remarking that they play a significant role in Kyrgyz society. He also agreed with Ambassador that the MFA should be the main Kyrgyz government point of contact for international NGOs.

"THREE PILLARS" AND THE FM'S PRIORITIES

¶3. (C) Karabayev said that President Bakiyev wanted to direct government efforts toward three "pillars of focus": political stability, rule of law, and improving conditions for the middle class. Karabayev then outlined a number of MFA priorities and programs he envisioned to carry out the president's goals and expressed the hope the USG could help implement some of them:

--Improved government training and communication. Karabayev said that all government ministries needed to be reformed, with a goal of better communication between the different agencies and ministries. The MFA and other ministries needed stronger press offices, and the press offices, in turn, should strive to share more information about government activities. Greater transparency would build public support.

--New mechanisms to deal with external debt. Karabayev claimed that President Bakiyev privately appreciated the "patience and assistance" provided to the Kyrgyz government regarding the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) debt initiative. Karabayev said that everyone in the government understood the benefits of HIPC, but because the debate became extremely politicized, the government was forced to

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reject it (Ref B). Karabayev requested Ambassador's assistance in finding other mechanisms, including possibly through the IMF and World Bank, to deal with Kyrgyzstan's debt.

--Better coordination between the MFA, Kyrgyz embassies abroad, and foreign missions in Bishkek. Karabayev said that his overseas missions addressed too many issues, were not sufficiently focused, and, therefore, achieved little. Karabayev suggested establishing working groups to develop bilateral "focal points," and that specific projects should be within the realm of possibility. Karabayev said, for example, that the U.S. and Kyrgyz governments should work as a "tandem" to develop a plan to achieve short and long term goals for the Kyrgyz Embassy in Washington and the U.S. Embassy in Bishkek.

--Capitalizing on WTO membership. The Kyrgyz government was uneducated about the potential benefits of WTO membership and, therefore, unable to capitalize on the advantages. Karabayev suggested that Kyrgyzstan could use the advice of U.S. experts to improve ecological and quality standards of agricultural products, with the goal of exporting them to European nations.

--Preventing conflict through enclaves research. The Kyrgyz government must conduct extensive research into enclaves, areas prone to political and social unrest, in order to mitigate conflict. The research would allow for timely prediction and prevention of possible flare-ups. Karabayev suggested that the government draw on the expertise of other nations successful in dealing with their own enclaves.

--Rehabilitation of middle schools. Although higher education facilities were doing well, Kyrgyzstan's middle schools were falling apart and in desperate need of upgrades. Optimally, Kyrgyzstan needed to build new schools, equip them with computers, and hook them up to the internet. Vocational schools also deserved attention, as the country

was in need of specialists, such as electricians and plumbers.

--Disposal of Bishkek's garbage. Bishkek needed to develop a garbage disposal facility to deal with the growing problem of refuse in the city. Kyrgyzstan must look for options to dispose of the waste in an environmentally safe manner.

--Oblast sponsor program. Taking an idea previously proposed by Roza Otunbayeva, Karabayev suggested the possibility of foreign missions in Bishkek "sponsoring" one or more of the seven oblasts in Kyrgyzstan, with a focus on humanitarian assistance.

--Environmental Program around Manas Air Base. Karabayev suggested the U.S. launch an environmental program to clean up the area around the base to produce good will.

--Local self-government. Provide a roadmap for a "complete administrative reform," including how the Executive branch relates to the other branches and how the regions interact with the center.

COMMENT

¶4. (C) The atmosphere during this meeting was completely different from Ambassador's introductory call on FM Karabayev. In this meeting, Karabayev was informal, engaged, and informed; his demeanor was downright jolly. He

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repeatedly expressed a desire to increase collaboration with the U.S. and offered guidance to counter the negative publicity that continues to shape the opinions of the Kyrgyz people. For someone talking repeatedly about the need to establish "focus," Karabayev was at times a bit scattershot in his approach to projects. Nevertheless, many of his ideas to promote transparency, good governance, economic growth, and improved education run parallel to U.S. assistance programs already in place. If he backs his words with action, Karabayev may prove an ally on many development goals.

LITZENBERGER